

Governor's Rural Task Force

Summary: Meeting #3 – November 17, 2015

Welcome and Task Force Introduction (Co-Chairs/Amy New)

- Welcome and opening statements from Commissioners Boyd, Johnson, and Triplett
- Mission: To build a stronger rural Tennessee by driving local, state and federal partnerships and stakeholders to continuously improve education, health, entrepreneurial opportunities, economic and workforce development, and digital infrastructure.
- Charge: Our engagement will align public and private resources and offer new strategic initiatives to create transformative, holistic solutions in asset-based economic activities across rural Tennessee.
- Long-Term Objective: Implement statewide policies and programs that improve the economy in all rural communities so that fewer counties are at risk and zero counties are distressed.
- Definition of Rural: All population, housing, and territory not included within “urbanized areas” as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Presentation 1: Ag Launch, Pete Nelson – An Initiative of the TN Dept. of Ag. and Memphis Bioworks

- Recommendation: Support Ag Launch to attract, start, and grow new agricultural enterprises across Tennessee

Presentation 2: PeopleBuildersUSA, Deanne Pierson – Workshop: Save Your Small Town, March 2016

- Recommendations:
 - A workshop “Save Your Small Town” has been scheduled for Pickett and Morgan Counties about place-making community development (More information to come)
 - Create a CDFI Fund to support small businesses

Presentation 3: Obion County Joint Economic Development Council, Lindsay Frilling – Northwest TN Regional Economic Development

- Recommendations:
 - Rural Incentive Funding – Cash and/or additional infrastructure and job training incentives, special loan rates for rural communities
 - Rural Prep Program – Site Development program similar to TVA InvestPrep Program
 - Rural Broadband Funding – For broadband incentives and expansion

Presentation 4: Northwest TN Workforce Board, Margaret Prater – ACT Work Ready Communities: A Tool for Rural Economic Development

- Recommendations:
 - Adopt the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate, as the “career ready” credential for ALL students graduating from high school.

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- Establish the MSSC Certified Production Technician program as a Career Technical Education Class in every high school to ensure a ready pipeline of qualified applicants for future economic development.
- Encourage TN Colleges of Applied Technology and community colleges to consistently award credit for Certified Production Technician credentials in STEM related technology pathways, supporting the Governor's Drive to 55 Initiative.

Presentation 5: West TN Industrial Association, Mike Philpot – Dynamic Virtual Building and Retail Development

- Recommendations:
 - Retail Development – Creating a Retail Alliance has been very successful in their communities to help educate on how to recruit, provide tools and contacts, and develop relationships with developers and companies.
 - Virtual Building – This has already brought rural communities more attention by reducing the capital investment, expediting launch for construction, and increasing visibility in marketing efforts.

Presentation 6: Upper Cumberland Development District, Mark Farley – Needs of Small Rural Counties: Technical and Financial

- Recommendations: Address these areas of need:
 - Community Leaders and Elected official training - Communities don't have the ability to invest in themselves. They often times are unaware of the programs that could provide assistance.
 - Support the Launch TN Entrepreneur Centers (Accelerators), especially in rural counties outside of the center's home county.
 - Tourism – Identify and learn to take advantage of assets

Presentation 7: Cumberland Region Tomorrow, Bridget Jones – Tennessee Regions' Roundtable Network

- Recommendations: Build on and partner with Tennessee Regions' Roundtable
 - Best Practice Publication (includes success stories from all regions of the state)
 - Quality Communities Training and Resource Series
 - Website and other communications
 - Implementation Funding Guide
 - Leadership Network